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Shultz Signals Discord

Disagreement Hinted Over Reported Deals With Iran on Hostages

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Secretary of State George P. Shultz, signaling indirectly his disagreement with the White House, said yesterday the declared U.S. policy of refusing to negotiate with terrorists for the release of American hostages is "the right policy."

Bombarded with questions the past two days over reports he opposed secret, U.S.-supported arms shipments to Iran, Shultz repeatedly refused to comment directly, citing a White House statement that it alone will deal with queries regarding U.S. dealings with Iran.

"There hasn't been any change in my posture or the guidance coming from the White House," Shultz told reporters en route here from talks in Vienna. "I don't particularly enjoy it. I like to say what I think about subjects," he added.

Nonetheless, he made clear that he disagrees with a reported White House decision to undertake secret negotiations with Iran to gain the release of American hostages in Lebanon by offering arms as an inducement. "I don't want to get down into this business, but I will say that I think the policy of not negotiating for hostages is the right policy," he said.

Shultz appeared to pick his words carefully to avoid saying whether he thought that this is still the administration's policy or whether he knew there had been a change in the case of the American hostages held in Lebanon.

President Reagan, who welcomed freed hostage David P. Jacobsen at the White House yesterday, was asked whether Shultz protested the operation. "We've all been working together," Reagan told reporters. Asked whether Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger support the program, Reagan said, "Yes."

White House spokesman Larry Speakes repeatedly refused to comment on reports that the United States provided military equipment to Iran as part of an effort to win release of Jacobsen and fellow hostages.

Senate Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) criticized the White House yesterday for failing to inform Congress of its efforts to secure release of hostages.

Senate Majority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.), warning anew that he opposes trading arms for hostages, said he has been assured by White House national security adviser John M. Poindexter that the administration is "not doing anything improper."

Meanwhile, two key House committee chairmen, Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.) of Foreign Affairs and Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.) of the intelligence panel, complained in a letter sent to Reagan Wednesday that they had tried unsuccessfully for two days to "obtain the basic facts" on the reported trip to Iran by former national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane.

"The total denial of information or explanation is simply unacceptable," they wrote. The two said the covert negotiations with Iran may have jeopardized longstanding foreign policy objectives, including refusal to negotiate with terrorists, remaining neutral in the Iran-Iraq war and coordination of policy actions with allies in the region.

Aides to Fascell and Hamilton said yesterday they had been unable to get information from either the State Department or the Central Intelligence Agency. "We are being referred to the White House, and the White House won't talk," one aide said.

The Justice Department is reviewing pending cases involving illegal arms shipments to Iran in case defendants cite news reports of secret White House involvement in such shipments.

The department does not expect to drop cases because, as one Justice source said, if someone were shipping arms illegally on the government's behalf, "he already would have raised that defense."

At the White House yesterday, Jacobsen appealed emotionally to the news media to avoid speculation about U.S. attempts to win freedom for hostages remaining in Lebanon.

Jacobsen, director of the American University Hospital in Beirut when he was seized in May 1985, appeared in the Rose Garden with the president after a flight from West Germany. Jacobsen vowed not to forget the other hostages and warned reporters that "simple speculation" could lead to the deaths of the hostages.

When reporters shouted questions at the president, Jacobsen said:

"Please, didn't you hear what I said at the beginning? Unreasonable speculation on your part can endanger their lives. I would like to take some time now and talk, but this is a day of joy for me. I have my children inside. I want to share it with them."

Referring to two hostages, he added, "And I want Terry Anderson to share the same joy with his family, and I want Tom Sutherland to share the joy with his family. And in the name of God, will you please be responsible and back off?"

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Reagan echoed the remarks, saying that "there's no way that we can answer questions having anything to do with this without endangering the people we're trying to rescue."

Referring to Jacobsen's release, the president added, "It has to happen again and again until we have them all back. And anything that we tell about all of the things that have been going on in trying to effect this rescue endangers the possibility of further rescues."

Jacobsen, 55, was released Sunday after being held by Islamic Jihad, a pro-Iranian Shiite group. Jacobsen had criticized Reagan last month in a videotaped message for not doing enough to gain the hostages' release, but yesterday he praised the president for seeking their release "from the day that the first American was taken hostage."

Earlier yesterday, Shultz discussed Syria and terrorism in his meetings with French President Francois Mitterrand, Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond during a brief stopover in Paris on his way home from Vienna.

Shultz, who met with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in Vienna, has been a leading advocate within the administration of taking a hard-line position toward terrorists and states that support

terrorist activities. He is pressing Western European nations to take joint steps to isolate Syria following the disclosure of British evidence that Syria was involved in an attempt to blow up a jumbo jet belonging to El Al, the Israeli airliner, in London last April.

Briefing reporters on his plane, Shultz went out of his way not to criticize France for refusing to join U.S. and British efforts against Syria and instead seeking Syrian cooperation in Paris' battle against terrorism.

Shultz noted that France's special relationship with Syria and Syrian-dominated Lebanon, a reference to its former status as the colonial power there.

"So that differentiates them somewhat both in the sense of what they may conclude but also as to action," he said, referring to consultations under way among European Community (EC) countries about possible joint action against Syria. France's relationship with Syria, he said, might give France "some special ability perhaps to influence the situation."

Shultz said the administration is waiting to see what EC countries decide in London Monday regarding Syria before taking further measures. Washington has withdrawn its ambassador from Damascus.